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ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the status of women in the secretariats of the United Nations system

Note by the Executive Director

1. The present note brings to the attention of the Governing Council for its information, the statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) on the "Status of Women in the Secretariats of the United Nations system" which was adopted by ACC at its first regular session of 1995, held in Vienna on 27 and 28 February.

2. In placing this item on the agenda of ACC, the Secretary-General stressed the need to take urgent steps to enable women to participate fully in the work of the system, not only for reasons of equity, but also to ensure that women's experience and concerns are brought to bear in all aspects of the work of the United Nations. ACC members concluded that the improvement of the status of women was a system-wide concern and expressed their commitment to the advancement of women as a policy priority. They noted that key requirements to effect change included determined managerial commitment and action at the highest level; a clear strategy, including specific, short-term targets; emphasis on effective monitoring and accountability of managers; appropriate training; measures to encourage the mobility of women staff; and the creation of a supportive working environment conducive to equal participation of men and women in the work of the organizations.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to note the statement of ACC on the status of women in the secretariats of the United Nations system.

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* UNEP/GC.18/1.

Annex

ACC Statement on the Status of Women in the Secretariats of the United Nations system

1. The members of ACC reaffirm their strong commitment to ensuring that the advancement of women is a policy priority within the organizations of the common system and to taking necessary measures to improve the status of women in their respective secretariats. Key to the achievement of gender equality goals is management commitment at the highest levels.

2. ACC is conscious that progress to date has, with some exceptions, been limited. While the overall proportion of women has increased in most organizations, the number of women in senior and policy-making positions remains low. A concerted effort needs to be made to implement existing policies fully, as well as to develop new initiatives to increase the participation of women at senior levels.

3. In the development of action plans, in the context of the overall human resources management strategies of the organizations of the system, emphasis will be placed on clear, specific, short-term targets, preferably at the level of organizational units. Efforts will be made to increase the flexibility with which the system deals with women candidates, to remove obstacles to their recruitment, retention, promotion and mobility, and to create a supportive environment. In addition to developing specific policies and monitoring mechanisms, Executive Heads intend to hold senior managers accountable for the implementation of these policies at the level at which the targets are set.

4. In light of the above, consideration will be given by members of ACC to the following to facilitate recruitment of women:

   (i) the feasibility of treating all women staff members of common system organizations as internal candidates in applying for vacant posts in any organization of the system;

   (ii) requesting organizations to utilize their field presences to prospect for women candidates in all disciplines;

   (iii) in cases where Member States are to submit candidatures, urging governments to submit at least one or more qualified female candidates for each position.

5. In order to encourage the mobility of women, consideration will be given to:

   (i) developing a system for inter-agency mobility of women staff to increase their experience;

   (ii) facilitation of spouse employment through amending the organizations' staff rules, where necessary;

   (iii) encouraging the further development of spouse employment opportunities which encompass not only the common system and other governmental and intergovernmental organizations, but also, to the extent possible, the non-governmental and multinational sectors, as well as introducing relevant provisions in host country agreements; and organizing efforts in each United Nations location to promote spouse employment, led in the field by Resident Coordinators and in each headquarters city by a lead agency.

6. With respect to the promotion of a supportive work environment and to the fostering of the necessary attitudinal changes, organizations will consider the introduction of measures which would lead to a climate conducive to the equal participation of men and women in the work of the organizations. Such measures would be related inter alia to the work/family issues currently under review, such as flexible working hours, part-time work, job-sharing schemes, child care and special leave arrangements.

7. In addition, those organizations which have not already done so, are encouraged to introduce appropriate policies and procedures to combat sexual harassment.

8. While the focus of these measures remains the advancement of women at all levels, ACC is conscious that particular attention must be paid to increasing the number of women in senior managerial positions.